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Elementary guidance, deriving much of its content from the developmental phenomena of middle childhood, is viewed as the maximization of human potentiality in the total range of the population. Included in the list of elementary school guidance objectives are (1) aiding academic development, (2) helping children develop health self-concepts, (3) aiding self-understanding, (4) aiding children with vocational development, (5) helping children to cope with complex inter-personal relationships, and (6) alleviating personal and emotional problems. Each of these objectives are explained. While guidance is a point of view, idea, and belief, it is also a function. Some of the key functions of elementary school guidance are: (1) child study, (2) early identification of children with special needs, (3) counseling, (4) work with other significant adults, (5) career development, and (6) coordination of school and community resources for guidance. Such functions are a must if counselors are to meet obligations to children at the elementary level. (KJ)

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Guidance For Total Development*

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While the title of this paper appears to be vague and even evasive, this is not my intent. Rather, the title "Guidance For Total Development" was selected because it offers enough leeway to explore several important aspects of guidance and counseling in the elementary school.

I shall begin with my concepts on the nature of the child since this seems to be basic to a discussion on guidance in the elementary grades. From there, I will deal with what I view as the objectives of guidance, and finally, will briefly discuss some key elements in guidance in the elementary school.

The Nature of The Child

Growing from childhood to adolescence and finally to adult status is a highly complex and personal process. It is also an individual process and for each person, growing up is a unique experience. This is another way of saying that no two individuals are the same. Even twins who may be anatomically alike, are in fact different, because their perceptions and experiences are different.

Second, the individual is always in a state of growing, developing, and becoming. He is never static. To paraphrase Erikson, a person never has, in the true sense, a personality; he is constantly developing and changing his personality. Development occurs with some degree of regularity and within limits, can be predicted.

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For descriptive purposes, development can be categorized into phases or stages that encompass physical, intellectual, and psychological, processes. Each individual is involved in all three processes of growth, i.e. physical, intellectual, and psychological; simultaneously.

Each phase of development presents some obstacles and some tasks which the individual must master if he is to move successfully into the next phase. For example, the tasks of walking and talking are generally achieved, at least in part, by the age of two. The child who fails to complete a developmental task on schedule may have some difficulty with later tasks. The tasks which the individual is expected to complete can also be likened to psychological crises. Such tasks as getting along with age mates, learning independence, and learning to read, as examples, clearly represent crises for the child, and the individual who fails to manage the crises is likely to suffer personality disorganization.

One of the most critical phases of development occurs when the child enters school. Here, for the first time in his life, he is confronted with a series of tasks that must be completed on schedule. Not only is the child expected to acquire certain skills as a consequence of academic training, but he is also expected to learn control, and to master the tasks of group living. The school, and the earger society make several rather specific demands upon children and youth, and further, have built in a system of rewards for those who master the tasks and punishment for those who fail.

To summarize this point, a child does not become an adolescent, nor does an adolescent become an adult without at least partial mastery of major tasks of life and without minimal management of life's crises. At certain periods these tasks and crises are more evident and more troublesome than at other stages. Middle childhood is such a stage, because it is here that the foundations for future development are laid. During these periods it is often necessary that the child receive personal and professional help if he is to progress successfully to the next stage. This factor alone is of sufficient importance to warrant counseling services for all children.

Third, the three processes of growth--academic, emotional, and physical are irrevocably intertwined and interrelated. A child is not just a learner, he is a person, an alive and growing individual--a whole person, striving to master the required tasks for his age period. Success in one area aids achievement in the other. Likewise, failure in any area of development leads to difficulty in another. To cite obvious examples, the academic failure generally experiences problems in relating to others and is likely to develop negative attitudes about school and about himself.

Fourth, most children in the elementary grades have the potential for learning, for developing good mental health, and for achieving an adequate adjustment to life. However, they often need help, and I might add that many need more and different kinds of help than they are now getting. The type of assistance provided during the critical years of middle childhood can make the difference between healthy development and maladjustment.

So what does all this have to do with elementary school guidance?

In the first place any program ought to be based upon the needs and characteristics of the population served. Elementary school guidance by it's very nature, must derive much of it's content from the developmental phenomena of middle childhood. Guidance at this level, as it should be at all levels, is more than a perfunctory service. Guidance is a process. The keynote of guidance is the maximization of human potentiality in the total range of the population.

With this background, let us now become somewhat more specific in terms of some major objectives of guidance at the elementary level. When we delve into the literature in this area we often face a set of most general and sometimes meaningless statements. For example, most writers list such basic objectives as developing self-understanding, self-acceptance, the ability to become self-directive and the like. Now I am in favor of such objectives but I am also afraid they are almost meaningless because they are so general and, operationally at least, impossible to deal with. Try explaining to a parent, or a school board member, or a superintendent for that matter, how you are aiding children to become self-directive. Isn't it a little unrealistic to expect children to understand themselves when we adults are still trying to discover who and what we are?

We need to get specific about what we are trying to do in elementary school guidance. If we know what needs to be done and how to do it, or even if we have some notions about it, then we ought to say it.

Guidance Objectives

As I implied earlier, I am still in the process of identifying and explorsng several possibilities in this area, and while my list of elementary school guidance objectives are by no means exhaustive, and certainly not refined, they offer, I think, some guideposts for future development.

1. Aiding Academic Development - In the American culture, learning and mastering subject matter in school is central to total development. Learning or failure to learn influences attitudes about the self and has a major impact upon total adjustment. Berline has noted that academic problems tend to produce defensive, withdrawn and alienated children. In his research he found that even small academic progress tends to reduce fear and negativism in children.

The fact is, that children who do not develop academically, approximately on schedule, and for whatever reason, are in serious trouble. Guidance ought to take cognisance of this fact and one of our major concerns should be to help children become effective learners. I will elaborate upon how counselors work to achieve this objective in our future discussions.

2. Helping Children Develop Healthy Self-Concepts - The behavior and output of an individual tends to be consistent with his feelings about himself. The self-concept develops as one experiences life, as he relates to others and as he faces success or failure. If children are to be successful in school and in life they need to develop self-confidence. They need to develop an accompanying trust and acceptance of others. Guidance should aid the child in developing a healthy and realistic self-concept.

3. Self-Understanding - A third major objective of guidance in the elementary grades, closely related to the above, is aiding children in self-understanding. Children ought to know their strengths and their liabilities--and they need to understand the relationships of their abilities and interests to achievement and opportunities.

4. Aiding Children With Vocational Development. Students in the elementary grades need some help in gaining relevant vocational knowledge that help further the developmental process. Individual help on such matters as understanding one's talents, abilities, and interests and learning how to utilize strengths is a long and complex process which should begin in the elementary school. In our competitive society we expect and, except in unusual cases demand, that each individual make some contribution. Work is essential, and if a person is to find his place in life, he must be prepared to function as a worker. Elementary school children, aided by the counselor can be helped to understand the importance of work and the effects of work upon their lives.

5. Learning to Deal with Complex Inter-Personal Relationships. Through individual counseling, elementary pupils can learn how to approach more thoughtfully and skillfully the continual inter-personal relationships in which they are involved. They can learn the how and why of their attitudes and their reactions to the people in their lives. In the safe and facilitating atmosphere of counseling, they can explore their feelings about others. They can learn how to relate to their peers and adults.

6. Alleviating Personal and Emotional Problems. Pupils in the elementary grades do have personal and emotional problems for which they need assistance. Problems such as shyness, lack of confidence, worrying, and problems in peer relationships often arise. Research reveals that many pupils having such problems prefer the assistance of an elementary school counselor. The counselor, in helping pupils find ways to solve a single problem, may provide avenues to the solution of larger problems.

Now we can move from this point to a consideration of key guidance functions. We need to keep in mind however that guidance is also a point of View about helping children and youth to grow up and to develop into healthy persons. It is an idea. An idea that every child is unique, that he is different from all others. It is also a belief. A belief in the dignity and worth of each child. A belief that each person has potential and that education should help the child utilize that potential.

Guidance is also a function. It is something that is done for pupils to help them become all they are capable of becoming and to assist them to meet the demands of society and of life. Guidance is a Unique service. It is something done by persons with the professional training and the personal interest necessary to carry out such activities.

Some of the key functions of elementary school guidance are as follows:

1. Child Study - Most child study programs in elementary schools with which I am familiar are totally inadequate for today's needs and problems. Yet, it is apparent that a good understanding of pupils is basic to effective planning for them or with them. The,

traditional practice in child study is to give some tests and to maintain a set of records, and from such data to make decisions regarding what is appropriate for childrens. Too, child study is generally viewed as something done for teachers and administrators. Little though has been given to including the child in this process.

Now tests and records are useful and necessary, and it is desirable for teachers and administrators to have such data on pupils. But this is not sufficient. To provide the type of assistance that pupils need, we ought to have data on readiness, social-development status, achievement, abilities and interests. Data regarding the home, and the impact of the school and the community upon pupils is also a necessity.

The need for children to understand themselves is also apparent. Child study then, should involve the child in a process of self-study.

Child study is a guidance responsibility. Guidance should aim to help the school staff refine the child study program. This includes not only helping teachers understand children better, but helping children understand themselves.

2. Early Identification of Children with Special Needs - If there is anything we have learned in the past few years, it is that the early years of life are critical to future development. The work of Bloom, Kagan and Moss, and others have greatly increased our psychological sophistication of the impact of the early school years. From their research we can conclude that the earlier we can identify and help students who are different - e.e. the gifted, the slow, the disadvantaged - the greater our chance for success.

Systematic procedures for early identification of children who need special and individual assistance ought to be a strong emphasis in elementary school guidance.

3. The third major elementary school guidance function is Counseling. Counseling by a professionally trained person on both an individual and group basis. This is a service provided for the purpose of helping children make a self-appraisal, to explore feelings, and to come to understand himself more clearly. Counseling should also focus upon helping the pupil understand his strengths and liabilities, and provide opportunities for the child to learn to make his own decisions.

In our society, with the emphasis upon group living, the individual often has little opportunity to receive the personal and individual attention that he can get from counseling. It is my belief that many children desperately need this personal help and attention. Recently there has been some research which indicates that counseling does affect positive changes in the children counseled. Other studies have shown that those who work in the elementary school, teachers, counselors, principals, feel that the major service of guidance should be counseling with individuals and groups of pupils.

4. Work with Other Significant Adults - Many persons influence the lives of children, either negatively or positively. And because the child is so dependent upon the adults in his world, it is often impossible to assist him without some simultaneous work with significant adults. Teachers and parents are among the most important people in the lives of

children and the guidance process must often include these adults if it is to truly reach the child.

Most teachers and parents, in fact most adults including counselors and professors often fail to comprehend exactly how we are affecting those in our charge. But most people, who work with children, in my experience, are quite willing to learn more if provided the opportunity. Guidance can assist others to do a more effective job with youngsters and properly planned consultation and in-service job with youngsters and properly planned consultation and in-service can enhance the relationship between adults and children.

5. Career Development - Assisting children to learn about the world of work is the fifty major guidance function. This is a guidance activity that many people do not fully appreciate but even a casual reading of some career development studies will reveal that the whole area of work ought to be dealth with in the elementary grades.

Planning for a career and finding one's nitche in the world of work is a major task in our society. One does not belong unless he makes a contribution through work. Career development is a process, not an event. We do not suddenly gain the insight and understanding necessary to choose life's work and enter into a career. It is a part of the total phenomenon of development.

Children need to develop attitudes about work, and workers; they need to understand the meaning of work in their lives. They should have an opportunity to begin to acquire some knowledge of why people work and of the importance of a job. At the elementary level this is obviously an exploratory activity - no one would suggest that elementary

children choose a career and start planning for it. But it is necessary that preparation begin early so that when pupils reach adolescence or early adulthood, they will have the background necessary to make a realistic decision.

6. Coodination of School and Community Resources for Guidance - While there are great differences among schools and communities regarding guidance services for children, all schools and communities have some personnel and some services who can provide some type of assistance to pupils.

One of the problems here has been that these resources are not utilized effectively, and one of the reasons has been that there has been no one to do the job. The problem of locating persons and agencies, and referring children for services is a legitimate elementary school guidance function.

This activity includes work with other school personnel such as psychologists, social workers, and health personnel as well as community agencies.

In summary, it is my conviction are finally recognizing that such functions as described here are a must if we are to meet our obligations to boys and girls in the elementary grades. Elementary school counselors, more and more, are being recognized as the professionals necessary to provide these services.

As I work with elementary school counselors, I am consistently impressed by their dedication, their professional attitude, and by their enthusiasm for their work. While there are still several problems to be solved and

much spade work still to be done, I am confident that elementary school guidance is on the threshold of acceptance as a vital aspect of education.

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